

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Present:

Absent:

Commissioners

Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Hector Elizalde
Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Dennis Tucker
Joe Leal
Tom Lasser
Tess Banko

Commissioners

Ruel Fuentecilla
Michael McDowell

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Ruth Wong, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Tom Ruck, Director, Los Angeles National Cemetery.

Roll Call

There was a total of seven Commissioners at the meeting – there was a quorum.

Chairman's Report

Chair Jackson-Kelley stated that the 2020 Meeting Locations will be deferred until after the meeting due to some new information by the commissioner from Hawthorne.

Commissioner Tucker briefed the commission about using the UC Berkley link for the Adulting School. He met with Larry Frank, Vice Chair, LA Community Colleges who linked him with Laura Perez, Dean, LA Southwest College. She loved the

idea and will see how she can assist with writing the curriculum for the Adulting Class program. The curriculum will go to the state for approval, then it can be implemented at LA Southwest as a pilot college.

Commissioner Lasser briefed the commission on the first goal of the Strategic Plan Report. To comply with the first goal, he has participated in outreach to Military by engaging in events and will meet with Ruth Wong, Director, Military and Veterans Affairs about promoting the Veterans Advisory Commission through welcome packets with information. He requested for everyone to help spread the word. Lastly, he mentioned that the website needs to be updated with the correct start time of 1:30pm.

Public Comments

Cesar Estrada briefed the commission about All American War Veterans which is a small group of fundraisers. They fundraise for churches, businesses, birthdays, and casinos. Currently, the group is working on a hub to bring the warriors in Westwood back home. He proposed to bring in about 2-3 Senators to attend a meeting held in Chicago during the summer to help with this project.

Stephanie Wade, Veteran Liaison for Congressman Cisneros, 39th Congressional District had two announcements:

1. A caucus has been put together for the Transition Assistance Program in efforts to organizing, studying, understanding and writing good legislation.
2. The Congressman is hosting a Veterans Resource Fair with Chairman Tukano, Veterans Affairs Committee on April 25th and would really like to see vendors participate at the event.

Kyle Orlemann, Chair, Hawthorne Veteran Affairs Commission, had two announcements:

1. Veteran Resource Fair at the Hawthorne Memorial Center on April 18th. She invited agencies and/or vendors to participate and provide resources.
2. There is a conflict in May for Hawthorne to host the next Veterans Advisory Commission meeting. She provided two alternatives; the first was to keep the date and move to a much smaller room or the second was to keep the entire facility reserved and move the meeting to June 10th.

Motion by Chair Jackson-Kelley in support to move the May 13th venue to June 10th at the Hawthorne Memorial Center and seconded by Commissioner Lasser. All present were in favor. Motion approved.

Guest Speakers

Retired Lieutenant Commander Rev Dr. S T Williams, Jr., Fair Chance Act, has served in the United States Navy for 23 years. He began working with the veteran population in Los Angeles in 2012. The Fair Chance Act helps to ensure that veterans are not being discriminated against in any way by employers. This helps give veterans who have been incarcerated as fair chance to demonstrate that there is a change. Veterans are provided with extra support with transportation and food to help with their success.

Tom Ruck, Director, Los Angeles National Cemetery, stated that the Columbarium has been opened for about 90 days. It is a sacred place instead of families having to go to Riverside. Currently they inurn about 90-95 a month, which is a little bit short of the goal; considering the number of veterans that live in Los Angeles. After a short survey, it was discovered that many veterans did not even know that the Columbarium existed. Please help spread the word. Veterans and their spouse may be eligible. Commissioner O'Shaughnessy suggested to go speak at the televised BOS meeting. Commissioner Jackson-Kelley suggested writing an article and send it to the Department of California, American Legion who can put it in their monthly Newsletter.

Dr. Laura Manyweather, Reentry Success Pathway, is an advocate for formerly incarcerated military. She has done research on male veterans who are enrolled in higher education. The purpose of her research is to effect policy for individuals returning from prison and to shift the conversation from negative and pervasive paradigm that faculty and employers view veterans and formerly incarcerated individuals. She is pushing for the Reentry Success Pathway to be a model at all the Community Colleges. Her recommendation and challenge is to be more intentional with hiring practices and reframed thinking about veterans or formerly incarcerated individuals because they are here and ready to work. She wants to create a pilot program at Community Colleges specifically for formerly incarcerated individuals completing their

certificates, degrees, job readiness training which can increase employability. Lastly, she is requesting that companies such as LA Metro consider hosting a friendly job fair for such individuals.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, stated the following Department updates:

2020 Annual Report – Pages 12 and 13 table represents the veteran statistics by County. Los Angeles brought in \$49,800 in new awards for veterans (number 1 in state) and increased from 22 percent utilization rate to 25.4 per cent. Two articles about our outreach events is on page 19. On page 24 there is a photo with Senator Archuleta discussion legislation. Our increasing numbers in veteran claims is primarily due to intensive posting of awards, veterans service officers posting their own awards, and the hard work of our staff serving veterans.

Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Housing Feasibility Study meeting was this morning to discuss zoning analysis report and findings and midrise development scenarios. County owned property is exempt from L.A. City building and zoning codes. Parking vehicular access Lebanon and Flower Streets. Three scenarios were presented but the first one is recommended by the architects – calls for 80 units of housing with 195 parking spaces. This scenario complies with the 75 feet restriction for high rise elevation. The next steps would be to draft the Feasibility Report.

Two events last week – Medal of Honor Recipients sponsored by the Medal of Honor Society; Black Military History month recognizing Tuskegee Airmen.

There is now a Veteran Service Officer in Cerritos, 4th District.

Vote Center locations “Don’t Wait, Vote Early” for two weeks beginning February 22 through March 3.

There is an upcoming Women Veterans Event in March.

Conducted first Board Meeting of the LAC Military and Veterans Employee Association – set up the non-profit – articles of incorporation filed with state, open a bank account; targeting a veterans’ day event.

Memorial Day weekend event 5th District Supervisor Barger – “Tribute to Veterans and Families.”

Culinary Arts Program Spring Cohort 2020 starting in February – first orientation last week with 17 potential candidates. Second orientation tomorrow and 13 potential candidates signed up through event brite.

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month’s Meeting

- Homeless Update – Commissioner Elizalde
- Adulting Classes – Commissioner Tucker
- Strategic Planning Report – Goal I, Objective 1 – Commissioner Lasser
- Partner with Public Libraries to provide benefits to veterans – Commissioners Elizalde & Banko

Follow-Up on Veteran Issues

None.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Banko announced that there are two upcoming events: 1) American Legion Post 43 (flyer) on February 21 from 10am-2pm. 2) Mayor’s Veteran Suicide Challenge on February 27 from 10am-12pm.

Commissioner O’Shaughnessy attended the LA Collaborative where moral injury was discussed. He learned that VASH vouchers are not being used because some landlords do not accept them. Also, Access provides Tap cards at no cost.

Commissioner Lasser reported that Supervisor Hahn was successful in securing two acres of property in Norwalk/Downey and will be constructing a 100-unit apartment complex for veterans worth 22 million dollars. He will provide an update at the next meeting on this project. On February 29th, Congressman Lieu will be having a joint military service academy orientation at LA Air Force base. May 16th is Armed Forces Day and it will be held in Torrance.

Vice Chair Elizalde briefed the commission on importance of the National Guard and Army Reserves because their situation is unique. He commented that the veteran families appreciate the support. He presented a flyer for the Vietnam Blue Water Navy Veterans and requested that it be posted up on the website for those Navy veterans who do not know they may be eligible for benefits.

Commissioner Tucker gave an update on the Adulting Classes; he met with Dean Laura Perez and she talked about helping these veterans with housing by teaching them some soft skills. These skills include being respectful to others, arrive to work on time, how to work in a team, conflict resolution, and financial literacy. It will be completely free – funded by the State and books are included, if necessary. This class can range from 5-16 weeks and will receive a college career and preparation certificate through the Chancellor's office when course is complete. He announced that Metro will begin a pilot program with ten women for the Bus Operator Academy for two weeks. These women will go through training and interview for a possible employment opportunity at Metro. Last, there is a huge job fair in June 2020 which will be done in phases. He will meet with 65 potential employers on May 22nd at a Round Table to discuss the importance of hiring veterans.

Commissioner Leal stated that he has been attending the Vet to Peer class provided by USVETS. This program is amazing. He encouraged all commissioners to look into the upcoming cohort. He announced that Supervisor Solis, 1st District, is cooordinating the 4th annual LA Expo coming up on July 25, 2020. There is a current housing project under the 1st District in South Gate, Bell and El Monte. He also visits homeless shelters frequently and assists with laundry and shower services.

Chair Jackson-Kelley attended both events at Patriotic Hall; the Medal of Honor (MOH) and Women Veterans on Point which is held on the first Friday of each month at Patriotic Hall. She encouraged everyone to please send any and all women veterans to attend this workshop because there is great food and information. She also attended a workshop in Orange County; Foundation for Women Warriors who came together and realized that there was a strong support system. Lastly, both she and Commissioner Tucker attended the Black History Program for the Army Corp of Engineering. George Davis, Executive Director, California African American Museum (CAAM), was the keynote speaker. It was a wonderful event.

Meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Secretary
February 12, 2020